

County of Placer

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For immediate release
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Placer County Health Advisory

Advisory for Friday, July 13, 2012 through Sunday July 15, 2012

Placer County, CA July 13, 2012 – Widespread smoky conditions will affect Placer County from the valley to the Lake Tahoe area from the Robbers Fire. Average concentrations of fine particulates (PM2.5) found in smoke, continue to fluctuate throughout the day, with conditions ranging from moderate to hazardous depending on the location.

The weather forecast from the National Weather Service is forecasting high temperatures and changing wind directions through the weekend. With a change in wind direction, smoky conditions may improve in some areas, however, smoke impacts may continue in areas throughout the county.

With the current smoke episode, Tom Christofk, Placer County Air Pollution Control Officer and Dr. Richard Burton, MD, Placer County's Health Officer recommend all residents of Placer County who can see or smell smoke to avoid all unnecessary outdoor activities.

With cooler temperatures in the early morning, smoke tends to move down the western slope becoming more concentrated in foothill locations. In the afternoon hours and early evening, conditions may improve in the foothills as smoke rises into higher elevations, including the Lake Tahoe area.

Reducing your exposure by using common-sense precautions is the best way to protect oneself from the smoke. If visibility is poor in your area, then it is advised that you consider postponing outdoor activities until conditions improve. If you are being impacted by smoke, the safest thing to do is to remain indoors, limit the intake of outdoor air into the home, and keep physical activity low. Wearing bandanas over the face and dust masks will not protect you from the microscopic particles found in smoke and will only impede airflow into the lungs. Consult your physician prior to wearing any type of filtering apparatus.

For youth and individuals involved in sporting activities and events, such as football and soccer, it is greatly encouraged that individuals limit or avoid such activities in smoke impacted areas. Individuals who may be physically working outside in impacted areas are also encouraged to reduce or avoid outdoor physical activities.

Particulates found within wildfire smoke contain a multitude of particles, such as wood tar vapors and toxic gases. Other pollutants found in smoke are carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, and hydrocarbons. Scientific studies have linked the fine particles associated with smoke with a variety of significant health problems.

Symptoms include eye irritation, throat irritation, and coughing. People with existing heart and lung disease, including asthma, may experience heightened symptoms. They should monitor their health and consult with their health care provider should their symptoms worsen. Even healthy people may experience some of these symptoms in smoky conditions. Seek medical help if you experience symptoms that worsen or become severe.

Dr. Burton and Christofk urge residents to keep in mind the following recommendations to limit one's exposure in these smoky conditions:

- Healthy people should delay outdoor strenuous exercise.
- Children and elderly people should avoid outdoor activities, particularly prolonged outdoor exertion.
- People with specific illnesses, particularly respiratory problems, should remain indoors.
- Using paper mask filters, which are not capable of filtering extra-fine smoke particles, and which restrict airflow, is not recommended.
- Stay inside with doors and windows shut. Use the recycle or recirculate mode on the air conditioner in your home or car. Avoid cooking and vacuuming, which can increase pollutants indoors.
- Asthmatics should follow their asthma-management plans.
- Contact your doctor if you have symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath, or severe fatigue. This is important for not only people with chronic lung or heart disease, but also for individuals who have not been previously diagnosed with such illnesses. Smoke can “unmask” or produce symptom of such diseases.
- Keep airways moist by drinking lots of water. Room humidifiers might also provide some comfort.

Use the following index to assess the air quality based on the visibility in a given area:

- Face away from the sun. Determine visibility range by looking for targets that are at known distances (miles).
- The visible range is the point where even high-contrast objects disappear.
- After determining visibility in miles use the following Wildfire Smoke Visibility Index to assess air quality.

Visibility Range	Health Category	Cautionary Statements
10+ miles	Good	None
5 – 10 miles	Moderate	Usually sensitive people should consider reducing prolonged or heavy exertion.
3 – 5 miles	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Sensitive people should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion.
1.5 – 2.5 miles	Unhealthy	Sensitive people should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion.
1 – 1.25 miles	Very Unhealthy	Very Unhealthy Sensitive people should avoid all physical activity outdoors Everyone else should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion.
<0.75 miles	Hazardous	Sensitive people should remain indoors and keep activity levels low. Everyone else should avoid all physical activity outdoors.

Information will be updated and posted to the District Web site as available at www.placer.ca.gov/apcd . For general air quality information, go to www.sparetheair.com. The Spare the Air website is a great site to monitor current air quality values for ozone and PM2.5. Smoke formation generates an increase in PM2.5

concentrations and the higher the concentration, the higher the Air Quality Index value. Before conducting any outdoor activities it would be prudent to visit this sight to review the Index and forecast for your area. If information is not provided for your general area, use the visibility index provided above to determine air quality.

Following is the Air Quality Index table for Particle Pollution for reference.

Air Quality Index (AQI)

Index Values	Levels of Health Concern	Cautionary Statements
0-50	Good	None
51-100*	Moderate	Unusually sensitive people should consider reducing prolonged or heavy exertion.
101-150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion.
151-200	Unhealthy	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion.
201-300	Very Unhealthy	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should avoid all physical activity outdoors. Everyone else should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion.
301-500	Hazardous	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should remain indoors and keep activity levels low. Everyone else should avoid all physical activity outdoors.

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